



## NCDOT Aims to Help You Save Time, Money During the Holidays



As motorists hit the road for the holiday season, NCDOT will suspend most construction activities to save travelers time and money.

### ***Major construction activities on hold during seasonal travel***

As families travel over the river and through the woods for holiday celebrations, the N.C. Department of Transportation will suspend most road construction activities on major routes across the state to help make their trips a little smoother.

By avoiding traffic delays, motorists can reach their destinations safely and efficiently, while cutting down on fuel consumption and costs. The list of closures will be available closer to the holidays on the Department's website.

Here are some additional tips for navigating the highways safely

### **NC Transportation Now**



On the latest N.C. Transportation now, the department shares safety tips for drone use, DMV offices across the state get upgrades for next-generation driver licenses, and NCDOT wants to hear what your favorite trails are around the state.

For more information on these stories, visit NCDOT's [YouTube Channel](#).

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### **NCDOT to Hold Public Meeting on Proposed Sweetwater Road Extension Project in Hickory**

The N.C. Department of Transportation will hold a public meeting for the

during the holiday travel season:

- Leave early to get a head start on your drive. Travel at non-peak hours when possible;
- Stay alert. Even if work is suspended, you may encounter narrowed lanes and traffic shifts in work zones;
- Be patient and obey the posted speed limit;
- Use alternate routes, when possible, to avoid traffic congestion;
- Stay informed. Real-time travel information is available online and over the phone by dialing 511;
- Don't drive drowsy. Travel at times when you are normally awake, and take frequent breaks; and
- Avoid distracted driving. When drivers stop focusing on the road ahead, they react more slowly to traffic conditions and are more likely to be involved in an accident.

For real-time travel information at any time, visit the Travel section of the NCDOT website or follow NCDOT on Twitter.



Every year, thousands of people visit McAdenville to see the town's light display. Photos courtesy of Steve Rankin

## NCDOT Helping Traffic Flow Smoothly Around Christmas Town, USA

Miles of brake lights ahead: It's one holiday light display no one wants to see.

And since more than half a million visitors will travel through McAdenville in Gaston County this holiday season for a glimpse of the town's iconic light display, the N.C. Department of Transportation is working to help traffic flow smoothly into and around [Christmas Town, USA](#).

proposed Sweetwater Road Extension Project (U-5510). The purpose of this meeting is to present the latest information and answer questions regarding the proposed project, which would extend Sweetwater Road through the campus of Catawba Valley Community College from U.S. 70 to Startown Road, creating a new route through campus.

The open-house style meeting will be held Thursday, Dec. 17, 2015, from 4-7 p.m. in the East Wing Auditorium of CVCC, located at 2550 U.S. 70 in Hickory.

The public can view project maps online [here](#).

For more information about the project and how to participate in the upcoming public meeting, click [here](#).

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### NCDOT Offers Drone Safety Tips

This holiday season, one of the most popular gifts could literally fly off the shelves.

Whether they're called quadcopters, radio controlled planes or any of the high-tech brand names, drones are expected to be big sellers this year, with some estimating as many as 700,000 will make their

The McAdenville light display began Tuesday, Dec. 1, and continues through Saturday, Dec. 26. The lights will shine Monday through Friday from 5:30-9:30 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 5:30-11 p.m.



"We all love the McAdenville Christmas lights and look forward each year to December 1," said Steve Rankin, McAdenville resident and webmaster of the Christmas Town, USA website.

"This is our 60th year of decorating our town and homes for all to enjoy."

Keeping traffic flowing on the roads that lead to Christmas Town, USA, is a priority for NCDOT. By helping to manage traffic for McAdenville's visitors, the Department can also keep things flowing for motorists who are passing through to other destinations.

The Department will place message boards on I-85 informing motorists of the following:

- Drivers coming from Charlotte should use U.S. 74 (Wilkinson Boulevard) into McAdenville; an alternate route is from I-85 South to exit 27 (N.C. 273) to U.S. 74;
- Motorists driving north on I-85 should use exit 22 (Lowell) into McAdenville; and
- The ramp from I-85 North to Exit 23 (N.C. 7) will be closed nightly during events.

For more information about Christmas Town, USA, including parking and other traffic information, click [here](#).

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## State Budget Adds I-85 Widening Project, Funds Completion of I-40/77 Interchange

Governor Pat McCrory recently announced that many transportation projects across the state will see construction dates moved up thanks to the signed 2015 state budget. This includes the addition of a project to widen I-85 in Gaston County and the completion of improvements to the I-40/77 Interchange in Iredell County, as well as the acceleration of

way into Americans' homes by the end of December.

All of these devices fall under the category of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS). UAS technology is an exciting and evolving field, which can lead to confusion for both UAS owners and the general public. The N.C. Department of Transportation is offering tips to help UAS owners enjoy their new technology while protecting citizens' safety and privacy.

"We're proud of North Carolina's legacy of being first in manned flight," said NCDOT Secretary Nick Tennyson. "The academic and industry researchers in our state will make us a leader in unmanned flight as well."

NCDOT's [Division of Aviation](#) has established guidelines for UAS operation in North Carolina. Both the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the NCDOT Division of Aviation classify UAS flight operations by three categories:

- Recreational: Any UAS flight that is conducted solely for the purpose of recreation;
- Government: Any UAS flight conducted by a

seven other local projects designed to improve mobility in the region.

"The reforms I signed into law will get these roads built sooner," Governor McCrory said. "The primary purpose of the reforms was to ensure transportation funds were being spent on transportation projects and not diverted to other state programs."

The state budget adds to the NCDOT's 10-year plan a project to widen I-85 in Gaston County from Exit 17 (U.S. 321) to Exit 10 (U.S. 74). Right-of-way acquisition for the widening project is scheduled to begin in fiscal year 2022, and construction is scheduled to begin in fiscal year 2024. Additional new or expedited projects in NCDOT's Division 12 include:

- Completing the improvements to the I-40/I-77 interchange in Iredell County: Right-of-way acquisition and construction scheduled for fiscal year 2018;
- Widening N.C. 150 from the relocated N.C. 16 to I-77: Right-of-way acquisition for Segment A accelerated from fiscal year 2025 to fiscal year 2022 and construction scheduled for fiscal year 2025;
- Upgrading N.C. 16 in Alexander County from the Catawba River to the Wilkes County line: Right-of-way acquisition scheduled for fiscal year 2022 and construction scheduled for fiscal year 2024;
- Widening N.C. 73 from N.C. 16 Business in Lincoln County to West Catawba Avenue in Mecklenburg County: Construction of Segment A accelerated from fiscal year 2024 to fiscal year 2023;
- Improving the intersection of N.C. 16 and County Home Road in Alexander County: Right-of-way acquisition scheduled for fiscal year 2020 and construction scheduled for fiscal year 2020;
- Constructing the Eastside Thoroughfare/McDonald Parkway in Catawba County from U.S. 321/70 to N.C. 127: Right-of-way for Segment B scheduled for fiscal year 2023 and construction scheduled for fiscal year 2025;
- Widening N.C. 180 in Cleveland County from N.C. 226 to N.C. 150: Right-of-way acquisition scheduled for fiscal year 2023 and construction scheduled for fiscal year 2025; and
- Improving the intersection of N.C. 3 and Kistler Farm Road in Iredell County: Right-of-way acquisition scheduled for fiscal year 2020 and construction scheduled for fiscal year 2022.

The state budget included additional funding for transportation through the elimination of the transfer from the Highway Fund to the General Fund and through other fee and rate changes resulting in an additional \$1.6 billion over the next 10 years for transportation construction. The additional money allows NC

government entity to support their work; and

- Commercial: Any UAS flight that serves a business purpose or provides a business benefit, even if that benefit is indirect.

Government and commercial UAS operators must adhere to state and federal requirements established by the North Carolina General Assembly and the [FAA](#). Each classification is subject to specific regulations and guidelines.

Many of the UAS owners who receive a drone during this holiday season will use them for purely recreational purposes. While recreational UAS flights are not heavily regulated, the FAA and model aircraft enthusiast groups have established a number of guidelines which should be followed to ensure a fun and safe experience:

- Always fly below an altitude of 400 feet and fly within your direct line of sight;
- Do not fly within 5 miles of an airport, near stadiums or other public events, or for compensation;
- Do not fly UAS



Transportation to add or accelerate a total of 248 construction projects across the state.

Ninety-two new segments of highway projects can now be funded in the recently approved 2016-2025 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), the department's 10-year construction plan. The construction schedules of another 90 highway projects already approved in the STIP are being sped up. An additional 66 non-highway projects are also being added to or accelerated in the program.



Division 12 Board Member  
Lou Wetmore

The department followed the Strategic Transportation Investments (STI) law to identify new projects (either segments or entire projects) at the statewide, regional and division levels. The projects were identified from those previously scored based on the same weights and criteria (data) used to develop the 2016-2025 STIP.

For the complete expanded and accelerated list of highway and non-highway projects, go to the NCDOT's [website](#). Additional information is available at the NCDOT's Strategic Transportation Investments [website](#).

The schedule changes, called amendments, were presented to the Board of Transportation for their review at their December meeting, with the Board's approval expected in January 2016.

that weigh more than 55 pounds; and

- Do not fly at night, even if your UAS is equipped with lights.

"UAS technology is fun and exciting, but it needs to be used responsibly," said Division of Aviation Director Bobby Walston. "These guidelines will help ensure the safety of people in the air and on the ground."

UAS operators, whether recreational, government or commercial, should keep in mind that North Carolina has laws governing drone use. UAS users are subject to all North Carolina laws, even if UAS technology is not specifically mentioned. Current and potential drone owners can find more information about state and federal UAS regulations on the Division of Aviation's [website](#).

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## NCDOT News

For the latest news from the N.C. Department of Transportation, visit the Department's [Newsroom](#).

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